

The Role of Potential Customer Engagement Antecedents in Creating Positive Customer Experience in an Online C2c Platform

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Abstract: The objective of this paper is to elaborate on the antecedent factors leading to customer engagement in a C2C platform. Specifically, the paper proposes that including online cues related to Customer to customer (C2C) interactions and coproduction in the engagement platform determines customer co-creation experiences. Moreover, the paper tests for the relationship between the co-creation experience and customer's purchase intentions. This paper tries to find out the most relevant factors which influences customers' experience in C2C platforms. By studying the extend of the factors influencing will contribute more on to engagement level of customer. The conversion of fruitful and intense customer experience will lead to a stronger customer engagement. In this study we explore in detail about the antecedents of good online customer experience , relationships between the antecedents(if any) and also which factor(s) act predominantly more in creating better customer experience.

Introduction:

Consumer to Consumer (C2C) forms of electronic commerce have contributed to new trends of doing business in the 21st century. The remarkable success of C2C promotes researchers to investigate C2C e-commerce from several perspectives, including technological, cognitive and marketing (Chen et al. 2007). However, it has been noted that not only is much of the prior China-focused e-commerce literature anecdotal (Martinsons 2008, P 332), but also that the C2C context tends to be overlooked, with most researchers focusing on the B2C market (Oh 2002).

It has been proposed that customer satisfaction and loyalty would differ in online and offline situations and can be caused by different aspects of brand impact and price sensitivity. (Shankar et al. 2003). Besides, customer satisfaction is recognised as both a critical factor and an objective in marketing (Erevelles and Leavitt 1992; McQuitty et al. 2000). Both practitioners and researchers believe that customer satisfaction can affect customer loyalty and retention, which may eventually engender higher levels of profit (Jones and Suh 2000; Reichheld and Sasser 1990). Researchers also suggest that gaining and sustaining customer loyalty is the ultimate aspiration of service providers because loyal customers "buy more, are easier to reach, and act as enthusiastic advocates" (Harris and Goode 2004). The relationship between satisfaction and loyalty has been confirmed in previous online and offline research (Lam et al. 2004). However, in online shopping situations, Jones and Leonard (2006) further indicate that satisfaction in C2C e-commerce is significantly different from that in both B2B and B2C e-commerce. They found that factors of service quality can contribute to C2C satisfaction, even though the same factors had not been found to be significant in previous studies of B2C e-commerce. As such, investigating the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty in the C2C context is an important and interesting topic that could advance our understanding of how to enhance both online customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In C2C online shopping platforms (such as eBay and TaoBao), the relationship between sellers and the platform is special. On the one hand, online sellers adopt the platform as their business base and follow the rules of the platform. On the other hand, online sellers are also relatively independent of the platform on which their shop is established. Despite this independence, inappropriate seller behavior may affect the platform's image. During the course of transactions, online buyers will mostly interact with individual sellers instead of the platform. Hence, transaction-specific satisfaction with the particular sellers and overall satisfaction with the website are worthy of investigation.

Review of Literature:

Customer experience:

The importance of the customer experience Several authors (see for example Pine and Gilmore 1998 and 1999, Shaw and Ivens 2002, Voss 2003, Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004, Meyer and Schwager 2007), have made the point that the customer experience may provide a new means of competition. Providing a good experience is also important because it affects customer satisfaction (Liljander and Strandvik 1997), delivers customer loyalty (Yu and Dean 2001, Pullman and Gross 2004, Mascarenhas et al. 2006), influences expectations (Johnson and Mathews 1997, Flanagan et al. 2005), instils confidence (Flanagan et al. 2005), supports the brand (Grace and O’Cass 2004 Berry and Carbone 2007) and also creates emotional bonds with customers or, conversely, leads to emotional scarring (Pullman and Gross 2004). However, despite these benefits, the limited amount of research in this area suggests that good customer experiences are not prevalent. For example, a recent survey by Bain & Co. of 362 companies, across several industries and their customers, found that 80 per cent of the senior executives interviewed said they provided a superior customer experience, but just eight per cent of their customers agreed (Coffman and Stotz 2007).

Customer engagement:

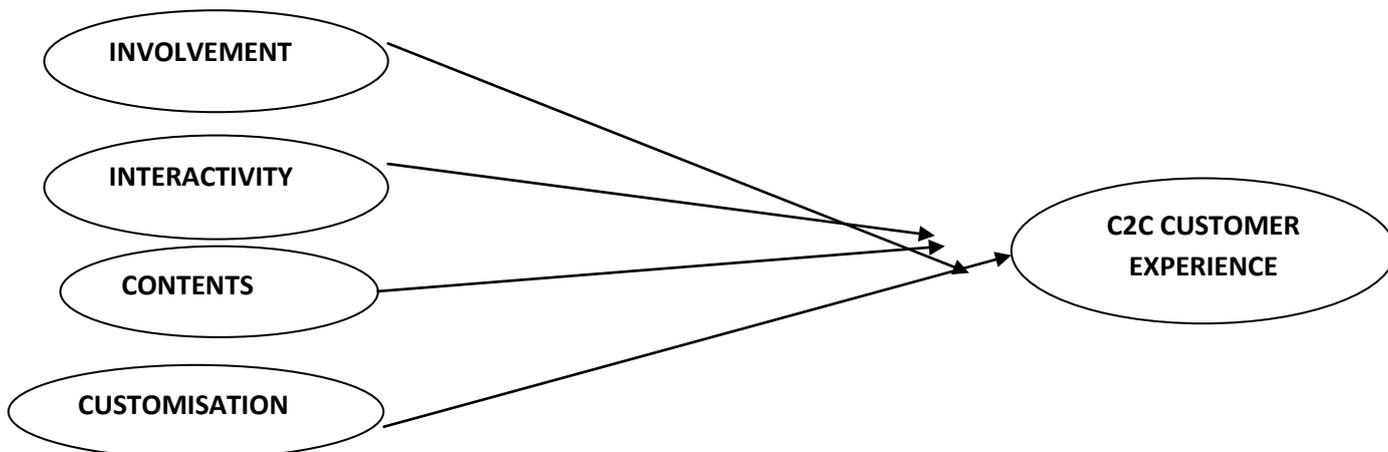
Gambetti and Graffigna (2010) identify the concept of engagement as a means to capture consumer experiences in customer-centric marketing approaches. Based on exploratory and systematic content analysis, these authors report evidence that (1) five contextual dimensions of engagement exist (consumer, customer, brand, advertising, and media), however, (2) consumer brand engagement is the only significant concept in their findings. In addition, Gambetti and Graffigna (2010) assert the importance of the behavioral activation component of engagement, including its co-creational, social sharing, interactive, collaborative, and participative dimensions. They thus call for holistic views of marketing brands. These authors call for further research in identifying the domain and nature of the concept.

Bowden (2009) presents a conceptual framework of customer engagement that considers the concept as a process. This process is envisioned to redirect satisfaction research toward an approach that encompasses an understanding of the role of commitment, involvement, and trust in the creation of engaged and loyal customers. In this view engagement and loyalty are distinct (but related) concepts. Brodie et al. (2011, p. 260) arguably provides the most comprehensive definition to date of the customer engagement concept:

“Customer engagement (CE) is a *psychological state* that occurs by virtue of *interactive, cocreative customer experiences* with a *focal agent/object* (e.g. a brand) in focal service relationships. It occurs under a specific set of context-dependent conditions generating differing CE levels; and exists as a *dynamic, iterative process* within service relationships that *cocreate value*. CE plays a *central role* in a nomological network governing service relationships in which other relational concepts (e.g., involvement, loyalty) are antecedents and/or consequences in iterative CE processes. It is a *multidimensional concept* subject to a context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral dimensions”.

So et al. (2014) most recently assert that the study of CE to date has largely been conceptual in nature, with little empirical support underlying the development of theory. So et al. (2014) present a first effort to operationalize (i.e., measure) the concept specific to the hospitality and tourism industry. Interestingly, So et al. (2014) trace the origins of the CE concept to *employee engagement* theory. Interestingly, these authors also ultimately rely heavily on the conceptual definition of CE advocated by Brodie et al. (2011). Figure 6 presents an alternative set of multidimensional concepts that So et al. (2014) build upon to develop their survey items.

Research Model:



Theoretical Model Development:

According to the above proposed model Customer experience is influenced by Customer involvement, Interactivity, contents and customisation. Accordingly 4 hypotheses have been developed.

H1: Customer involvement positively leads to delightful customer experience.

H2: Interactivity positively leads to delightful customer experience.

H3: Website contents positively leads to delightful customer experience.

H4: Customisation positively leads to delightful customer experience.

Results

Measurement Model

Four variables in the above research model are divided into following items depending on the intensity of influence.

Constructs	No: of items
Involvement	4
Interactivity	3
Contents	2
Customisation	3

ITEMS	Probability of influence
Involvement	0.6
Website content	0.94
Ad Quality	0.35
Product variety	0.95
Website interactiveness	0.88
Customer interaction	0.85
Product information	0.95
Information coverage	0.88
Convincing website Information	0.35
Purchase conversion	0.88
One-to-one Customization	0.75
Comparative customization	0.95

According to the analysis, majority of the customers get involved in online C2C platform because of website content. From the above interpretation, out of the 12 items, the least significant items are Ad quality and Convincing website Information. This means that delightful customer experience is not influentially driven by Ad quality and Convincing website Information. This proves that customers don't fall on the quality of the advertisement which is in the website, rather majority of the customers go for product varieties.

From the above analysis it is derived that customers do expect provision for expressing their views and interactive platform. More customers are delighted towards online platform that is more interactive. Most of the customers feel that they are getting enough information about the product. But the customers also feel that the information is not full and elaborate when compared to offline outlets. Customers in majority feel that online C2C platform is strong enough to make purchase decision. When discussing about one-to-one customization perspective majority customers feel that the existing C2C platform has above average customization level, but not par with their expectation level. But majority of the customers feel that C2C customization is much better than the offline platform, and hence C2C will be more preferred by the customer than offline in customization perspective.

Future Research implication:

This study is based on the various perspectives covering the factors of C2C engagement platform. The factors were selected based on previous literature and after conducting detailed review of literature. In the previous literatures also the emphasis was given to the various drivers and antecedents driving based on website feature or consumer behaviour. Studies should also come emphasising on the personality traits of the consumers which also can act as a greater factor leading to customer experience.

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